



HQ AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB TX



News Clips are compiled for the AETC Commander and staff by AETC/PA. Copyright restrictions apply. **13-Feb-04**

Air Force investigates alleged rapes at Texas base

By ANGELA K. BROWN (Associated Press Writer)

The Associated Press

Web Posted : 02/12/2004 11:27 PM

The U.S. Air Force is sending an official to Sheppard Air Force Base to investigate about two dozen reported rapes of military women in the last year, U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison said Thursday.

Hutchison, R-Texas, sent a letter to Air Force Secretary James G. Roche on Wednesday calling for an investigation "with emphasis on how commanders concluded each of these cases to the satisfaction of both the Air Force and the alleged victims."

In fiscal year 2002-03, between 20 and 25 Sheppard women reported being raped, according to First Step, a civilian rape-crisis center in Wichita Falls. In that same period, 542 rapes were reported to the center, which serves 12 counties.

Hutchison said the situation could rival that of the Air Force Academy in Colorado, where the military's mishandling of rape complaints were exposed last year.

"Both the number of incidents and the duration over which they occurred are unacceptable," Hutchison wrote. "In fact, any incident is unacceptable."

She said Thursday that she was pleased with the military's speed in sending an investigator to the Wichita Falls base this week, a few days after the alleged rapes were reported by The Denver Post.

Most reported rapes of military women occurred off base as they were drinking and socializing with airmen, and several cases involved two or three men allegedly raping one woman, said Xochitl Pruitt, program director for First Step.

Many victims don't report rapes because they feel ashamed or that they won't be believed, and many in the military often fear that they will be punished because they were drinking, victim advocates say.

"So many people in the military feel that if they seek services on base ... it somehow will impact their career," said Annette Burrhus-Clay, executive director of the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault.

Sheppard officials won't say whether the number of reported rapes in 2002-03 is an increase from previous years but say reports of rapes have always been taken seriously at the base.

From 1993-2003, 45 Sheppard airmen faced court-martial or received nonjudicial punishment for sexual assaults, said Maj. Manning Brown. Three of those courts-martial resulted in acquittal, he said.

"It goes without saying that one (rape) is too many," Brown said. "There's a zero-tolerance policy in the Air Force, and Sheppard fully supports that. The safety and welfare of every person at Sheppard is our number-one priority."

San Antonio Express News

PAGE: Internet

DATE: 13-Feb-04



HQ AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB TX



News Clips are compiled for the AETC Commander and staff by AETC/PA. Copyright restrictions apply. **13-Feb-04**

About 3,800 airmen and 6,100 students are stationed at Sheppard's 82nd training wing, which does technical training. Another 450 pilots from 13 nations train every year at the base's 80th flying training wing, Brown said. Those numbers include about 1,800 women.

Monna Kline, First Step's interim executive director, said the center does not report any rape to Sheppard without the victim's permission. But the center provides statistics so the base can be aware of the cases reported.

"If it's going to help step up security, then that's the information we will give because we're working toward the same goal: to stop violence," she said.



AETC Bases News Clips

Sheppard AFB, TX



News Clips are compiled for the AETC Commander and staff by AETC/PA. Copyright restrictions apply. **13-Feb-04**

Ex-counselor takes issue with Post story

Grimsinger says quotes about Sheppard taken out of context

By Lee B. Weaver
Times Record News
February 13, 2004

A former Wichita Falls crisis counselor cited in a recent Denver Post article said Thursday her remarks were taken out of context in the story.

The article - which told of widespread sexual assaults at Sheppard Air Force Base in the past year going "largely unnoticed" - ran in Wednesday's edition of the Post. It included quotes by Laura Grimsinger, executive director of First Step Women's Shelter and Sexual Assault Counseling from 1987 to 2002.

Grimsinger, who now works in the Electra school system, was reached by phone in Austin where she was attending an educational conference. She expressed surprise upon hearing her quotes read back to her.

"Oh, they made that sound a lot more dramatic than I meant it to be," she said.

The Post story quoted Grimsinger as being critical of Sheppard's treatment of sexual assault victims and its reluctance to investigate sex crimes: "(Sheppard) wants to minimize sexual assault and not address it. They turn their backs on them (victims), and it's devastating. The training schools are the big problem. These women are way outside their home element and have little support."

Grimsinger confirmed part of the passage but not all of it.

"Part of it is accurate in that these are kids (at the base), and they are out of their home element. This is the first opportunity to have this type of adult freedom," she said.

But Grimsinger took issue with how her quotes were used in the story, which focused on a rash of "more than two dozen" sexual assaults involving base personnel from June 2002 to June 2003.

"I was not involved with First Step during that period of time," she said. "I did not speak to anything that has happened since I left."

Grimsinger did acknowledge communication and education problems between Sheppard and First Step during her tenure.

"During my time there, we had very few interactions with Sheppard in reference to sexual assaults," she said. "Part of that is because First Step wasn't as aggressive about getting our message out as we could have been. And part of it is that the military culture doesn't really encourage that sort of thing."

Victims of sexual assault often refuse to press charges or even report the crime, Grimsinger said.

"One reason why Sheppard didn't (address sexual assaults) was because the victims did not want Sheppard to be involved," she said. "They just want the violence to stop."

Times Record News
PAGE: Faxed
DATE: 13-Feb-04



AETC Bases News Clips

Sheppard AFB, TX



News Clips are compiled for the AETC Commander and staff by AETC/PA. Copyright restrictions apply. **13-Feb-04**

Over time, relations between First Step and Sheppard have strengthened to include more communication between the parties.

"Later, there were times when we were called on to come out and help and times when students were mandated to come in for counseling," she said.

Sometimes though, the base's best intentions were thwarted by insensitivity, she said.

"There was one instance that they were trying to get a (victim) to come in for counseling with us. But at the same time, they forced her to work in the same group on base as her attacker," Grimsinger said. "She eventually just dropped out."

Grimsinger said she knew of no instances of when the base intentionally shirked its duty to support assault victims or investigate sex crimes.

"I cannot tell you that I know of sexual assault cases that were covered up," she said.

But she isn't sure the public always sees the whole story.

"Do I think that cover-ups still took place? Sure I do. Do I know for a fact? No."

Staff writer Lee B. Weaver can be reached at (940) 763-7548 or with e-mail at [weaverl\(at\)TimesRecordNews.com](mailto:weaverl(at)TimesRecordNews.com).

Times Record News
PAGE: Faxed
DATE: 13-Feb-04



AETC Bases News Clips

Sheppard AFB, TX



News Clips are compiled for the AETC Commander and staff by AETC/PA. Copyright restrictions apply. **13-Feb-04**

Suspect's Article 32 wraps up

Airman faces possible court-martial in connection with murder

Jessica Langdon

Times Record News

A lot of Senior Airman Shelby Orelup's friends thought her body lay several dozen yards off of Sheppard Access Road. They saw yellow tape on a tree and assumed that was the spot — so that was where they set up a makeshift memorial with balloons and flowers, they testified this week.

The only person who had a different idea about where her body was left "was the accused," a government prosecutor said.

Maj. Joseph E. Kiefer said that's just one reason the government believes there's sufficient evidence to recommend a court-martial for Staff Sgt. Jason Arindain, who is accused of murder, rape and forcible sodomy.

The prosecution and defense highlighted their main points as three days of testimony in Arindain's Article 32 hearing wrapped up Wednesday afternoon.

Arindain's defense counsel argued there was no evidence — no shoes, vehicles or things inside vehicles — linking him to the scene where Orelup's body was found Feb. 28, 2003.

"We have nothing there to tie it to Jason Arindain," defense counselor Capt. Kathleen V.E. Reder said, following testimony by Special Agent Nancy Keck, with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations.

Keck said the investigation is ongoing and more evidence is being tested.

Kiefer said testimony from a DNA expert pointed out that Arindain's DNA was on Orelup's body — and that did place him there.

Keck testified that in an interview, Arindain said the last sexual contact he had with Orelup was the second week of January.

Kiefer said the stories didn't add up.

The investigating officer in the hearing, Maj. Barbara E. Shestko, asked where the clothes were that Arindain wore in video taken on the night of Feb. 27, 2003. He and Orelup were captured on a Wal-Mart surveillance tape. Shestko also asked to see the tape.

Defense counselors said accusations of rape and sodomy didn't add up, and that the government failed to show this case should go on

to a capital murder referral. Shestko said that would also prolong the case, which wouldn't be in anyone's best interest.

Kiefer asked Shestko, "to take a hard look at facts, circumstances and evidence."

Shestko told both sides she will make completing her report a priority but wouldn't guarantee it would be finished within the normal five duty days.

"This has nothing to do with time," she said. "It has everything to do with making sure I review everything to the degree that I need to do that."

Shestko's report and recommendations will weigh into whether Arindain will face a court-martial in connection with Orelup's death.

Times Record News
PAGE: Faxed
DATE: 13-Feb-04



AETC Bases News Clips

LUKE AFB, AZ



News Clips are compiled for the AETC Commander and staff by AETC/PA. Copyright restrictions apply. **13-Feb-04**

Pipeline plan near Luke panned

By ANNIE KARSTENS
Surprise Today

West Valley cities and groups are denouncing a planned gas storage facility and pipeline near Luke Air Force base.

Surprise passed a resolution in January condemning the plan by El Paso Natural Gas to use a salt cavern near the base as a storage facility. City officials throughout the West Valley have sent a letter opposing the operation.

"We want make sure that everybody that addresses the issue knows about our opposition to it," said Peoria Mayor John Keegan. "We're using what political tools we have available to impact decisions."

Lobbyists in Washington, D.C., have joined in the opposition in the interest of Luke, along with U.S. congressmen and other officials representing the region's interest, Keegan said.

El Paso Natural Gas Co. is preparing to develop the 9.6 billion-cubic-foot storage facility in the salt caverns near El Mirage Road between Northern and Glendale avenues. A proposed 36-inch-diameter natural

Storage unit would be one of world's largest

From A1

gas pipeline would skirt Luke to the west and north and connect to the facility.

"Allowing underground gas storage facilities within a few miles of an airfield would jeopardize Luke's mission and survival," said state Rep. John Nelson, R-Phoenix.

El Paso owns 455 acres near the base. The company wants to build the gas storage facility there because of an underground salt dome, where the company could create three large salt caverns. Each cavern could store 3.2 billion cubic feet of natural gas, company officials said.

Grady Parton, area manager with El Paso, said the storage facility is needed in the area. It's an ideal spot because it's near power plants that would utilize the gas being stored there and there's ample space in the caverns, he said.

"It's a good salt formation as it's about 10,000 feet deep," Parton said, adding the project should be viewed as completely safe by surrounding communities.

"There are hundreds of these facilities across the country and I've never heard of any problems," he said. "When some people hear of high pressure, they get excited and scared too quickly."

Throughout the planning process, the company has made

efforts to educate the surrounding communities of what the project would entail and to assure people the facility would not pose a threat to the neighborhoods, Parton said. He is aware some people or organizations may disapprove of the proposal.

"If there's any backlash, it's from people who don't know much about it," he said, adding that the project will undergo a highly regulatory process that could last two to three years.

The Sun City Home Owner's Association board of directors unanimously passed a resolution stating its opposition to the placement of a natural gas storage facility and pipeline at its proposed location, which is near Luke Air Force Base, an elementary school, homes and businesses.

Tom Stolt, director on the HOA board, said the facility could be more dangerous than the gas company would ever let on.

Keegan said the facility could be one of the largest underground storage areas in the world.

"There is a tremendous number of concerns putting something of that nature so close to communities," he said. "The gas company has not proven their case to me."

Annie Karstens may be reached at 876-2532 or akarstens@aztrib.com.

See Storage unit, A5

Surprise Today
PAGE: Internet
DATE: 13-Feb-04